

Perchlorate poster prepared for 6/98 NEJAC meeting

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PERCHLORATE CONTAMINATION OF WATER

Prepared by: Kevin Mayer, Superfund Division

Phone: 415-744-2248

ISSUE: Perchlorate, a water-soluble component of solid rocket fuel, recently has been detected in numerous public water supply wells and in Lake Mead and the Colorado River. Perchlorate is known to interfere with thyroid functioning at high concentrations. Long-term effects of low concentrations are unknown. The best assessment of environmental health effects is EPA's provisional reference dose of 4 to 18 ppb in drinking water. The ability to detect perchlorate at concentrations below 400 ppb was developed in March 1997 and is now 4 ppb. Technology for treating water supplies to remove perchlorate is very limited, relatively untested for perchlorate and likely to be very expensive.

CONCERNS:

- Current toxicological data for perchlorate is limited. Known health effects on thyroid systems raise concerns for long term effects of low concentrations on children and adults with impaired thyroids.
- Tribes along the Colorado have expressed strong concern in several Council resolutions on the compromise of this critical resource, including issues unique to tribes.
- Public advocates have expressed concern that large populations in Las Vegas and Los Angeles areas are exposed to perchlorate. Less affluent communities are not able to afford bottled water or other alternatives. -More than 14 recently discovered sources contaminate the water supply of more than 10 million people in CA, NV and possibly AZ.
- Perchlorate use documented in more than 35 states.
- Limited investigation outside CA and NV using the improved detection method.
- More work is needed to develop an economical, reliable treatment technology for perchlorate that employed in less affluent communities.

CURRENT STATUS: The Perchlorate Study Group (an industry group) in partnership with the USAF are performing nearly \$2 million in toxicity studies on perchlorate. Results are scheduled to be submitted for EPA (NCEA) review in 9/98, and EPA-sponsored peer review in 10/98 to establish a reference dose. Perchlorate is one of 60 contaminants on EPA's Drinking Water Contaminant Candidate List for decisions on regulatory action. The Interagency Perchlorate Steering Committee held a Stakeholders Forum on May 19-21 in Henderson Nevada.

FUTURE ACTIONS: EPA will be expected to rapidly assess new toxicological data in 1998 and use the available information to make regulatory and policy decisions.

Interest from Elected Officials: Senators Boxer(CA) and Reid (NV) and Rep. Lewis (CA) have sponsored legislation for research on perchlorate in drinking water and the environment. Other California congressmen, particularly from Southern California, have requested briefings on perchlorate. State legislative interest is particularly high in California. Tribal Councils have passed resolutions expressing strong concern over contamination in the Colorado River.